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FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1912
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1794
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0831
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0826
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0556
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0406
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2335

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SUBJECT: NAGALAND POLLS GO OFF PEACEFULLY, CONGRESS NOW HAS TO WAIT
AND SEE

REF: KOLKATA 0036

11. (U) March 5 Assembly elections went off peacefully in the Northeast Indian state of Nagaland as Congress and the Nagaland People's Front (NPF)-led coalition of Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) vied for control of the 60-member Assembly. Voter turnout was about 85 percent, a two percent drop from the 2003 Assembly elections. Final results are expected on March 8, and while Congress may fare better this time around, their chances at forming a ruling coalition depend on the success of their partners.

12. (U) The March 5 election took place under President's Rule in Nagaland after Congress legislators complained of a lack of governance and transparency (reftel). During their campaign, Congress candidates tried to convince voters that President's Rule was a "blessing in disguise," while NPF-led DAN called it a symbol of "Delhi's hegemony." While both Congress and the NPF fielded candidates for nearly all 60 seats, the BJP fielded 23 candidates and Congress' UPA partner Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) fielded 25. For the first time in a decade, Congress stalwart S.C Jamir did not participate in the elections -- he is now the Governor of Goa - a fact which reduced the tensions between the Congress and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim - Isak Muivah, and which likely won Congress some support. Along with some defections from the DAN coalition after imposition of President's Rule (reftel) Congress is in the driver's seat, but will still need the support of some smaller parties who are likely to gain some seats, such as the RJD, to form a government.

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